

## Takoma Park Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee Operations

I have been asked to put on paper the various operating conventions of this committee that seem to have arisen over the years. Please people, these are **not RULES!** They are operating conventions that have been found to be useful.

It was found that the “public safety” rubric covers such a wide field that a committee made up of 12 volunteers could not possibly do all the work grouped under it. After all, public safety includes most of the quality of life components such as: crime (police), fire, ambulance, public health, sanitation, emergency preparedness, vehicular and pedestrian safety (traffic), etc.

As a consequence, and because people naturally gravitate to those issues that interest them personally, PSCAC members are generally expected to take charge of an aspect of public safety they have a personal interest in (and maybe have some qualification). These can be short or long term projects that they are at liberty to organize any which way they find convenient and comfortable. PSCAC encourages, however, that members recruit people from outside the core committee to help complete these projects. This is because these projects usually require a lot of work so that getting help from the “outside” (e.g. neighborhood associations and groups, students doing community service projects) assures that the work can be done without the committee member going bonkers. It also assures a melding of ideas, may broaden the list of proposed solutions and draws in additional public support. It is also thought to be useful to declare or consider such a project group a “PSCAC subcommittee” with the committee member the subcommittee chair. This is thought to provide a level of “official charter” that may sometime be necessary for the project.

*In proceeding with projects as described above, it is important to remember that PSCAC is intended to operate and proceed with projects that concern issues that have city wide applications. For example, issues concerning placement of a speed bump at a particular spot should be left to the neighbors to work out. Policy issues relating to the use of speed bumps as means of traffic calming are, however, concerns of PSCAC.*

*Another guiding principle of PSCAC is the intent to build a Public Safety Infrastructure in Takoma Park. This includes support for Community Oriented Policing, an interconnected net of Neighborhood Safety Contacts, and a strong, appropriate and active Emergency Preparedness Plan. This infrastructure should be actively supported by the various city committees, neighborhood associations and interest groups, and be self-sustaining.*

PSCAC can request monies from the City Manager to be used for projects and to pay for training and seminars.

The Takoma Park Police Department (TPPD) and PSCAC are “partners” and the Chief of Police is regarded as a representative of this partnership on the committee (a de facto member). Also by virtue of this partnership, the TPPD acts as the mandated “city staff” support for PSCAC.

Recruiting members is of continuous interest. All PASCAC members are expected to be on the lookout for prospective members, particularly from the underrepresented communities of Takoma Park.

## **DRAFT**

PSCAC meets every fourth Thursday of the month, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building. Exceptions are made when these days are holidays, then the third Thursday is usually selected; although at times the month is skipped (e.g. December/Christmas).

PSCAC meetings, as all city committee meetings, are open to the public without exception. The committee is required to publish an Agenda and Minutes.

A typical meeting progresses from taking attendance to reading and accepting last month's minutes, then summary reports from the various ongoing projects, to the special agenda items. Usually no more than two agenda items are scheduled because experience has shown that this is about all that can be squeezed into the two hours.

Minutes are taken using the PSCAC laptop by PSCAC members who volunteer to perform this service for the committee. This is enormously helpful to getting out comprehensive and timely minutes. Approved minutes are required to be turned in to the City for archiving.

The meeting is chaired/facilitated to keep it focused and to allow it to conclude on time. This function may be discharged by the committee Chair or by anyone else interested. Sometime the time-keeping function is parceled out to a volunteer if the meeting chair is not comfortable with it. Whatever works for the membership.

Short project reports (one or two paragraphs) and last month's minutes are circulated via email 3-5 days before a monthly meeting so that only questions need to be discussed during a meeting. (Again, just so that the two hours can be used productively.)

Lengthy discussions that seem not to occupy all the members present are directed to be taken "off-line" to be discussed and resolved by the interested parties. Resolution of the discussion will then be reported back at the next meeting.

Agenda items that cannot be concluded in the scheduled time (i.e. before 9:30 p.m.) are rescheduled for conclusion during the next meeting.

It was recently decided that PSCAC hold a joint meeting with Neighborhood Safety Contacts twice a year.